An Assessment of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters’ Commitment to Reintegrate

A Case Study of Kwale County, Kenya

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Abstract

The preoccupation in the past decades with theorizing radicalization in order to prevent violent extremism has left deradicalization undertheorized. As the number of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) is expected to increase as a result of the anticipated military and intelligence advancement on terrorism, the reintegration imperative stresses the urgency to develop comprehensive reintegration and deradicalization strategies.

This study seeks to contribute to filling the research deficit begging for empirical data informed by FTFs’ experiences of, and challenges in, reintegration, through qualitative interviews with returning FTFs in Kwale County, Kenya; a county producing a relative majority of Kenyan recruits to Al Shabaab who are now offered amnesty on return to their county of origin. The Life Psychology framework, which assumes an inherent human strive to obtain a good life, i.e. life embeddedness, is adopted for the analysis. The study finds that returnees commit to reintegration in the absence of other alternatives, due to economic incentives and longing for acceptance. It confirms that the process requires the societal motivation in facilitation, but will fail without the sustained commitment of the returning FTF. The study further establishes that returning FTFs are not able to obtain a flow in life embeddedness, which would indicate inability to reintegrate. Yet, many of the interviewed returning FTFs express the contrary, which challenges the concept of life embeddedness as an indicator for reintegration. The study further challenges the general assumption that deradicalization is a precondition for reintegration, as it finds that radicalized individuals are able to reintegrate into communities of origin without deserting held radical beliefs, if those communities share radical sentiments.

This study contributes to filling the deficit in empirical data, which when advanced will work to avert security threats posed by returning FTFs and enable utilizing the potential of the phenomenon to counter violent extremism.

Key words: Al Shabaab, Terrorism, Foreign Terrorist Fighter, Reintegration, Countering Violent Extremism, Returnee, Life Psychology, Life Embeddedness, Kwale, Kenya
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- AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia
- CBO: Community Based Organizations
- CSA: Civil Society Actor
- CSO: Civil Society Organization
- CVE: Countering Violent Extremism
- FBO: Faith Based Organization
- FTF: Foreign Terrorist Fighter
- GoK: Government of Kenya
- GTI: Global Terrorism Index
- IEP: Institute of Economics and Peace
- IOM: International Office of Migration
- KCPCVE: Kwale County Plan to Counter Violent Extremism
- KDF: Kenya Defence Forces
- MRC: Mombasa Republican Council
- NCIC: National Cohesion and Integration Commission
- NCTC: National Counter Terrorism Centre
- NSCVE: National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism
- RAN: Radicalization Awareness Network
- UHR: Universitets- och Högskolerådet
- UN: United Nations
- UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
- UNOCD ROEA: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office in Eastern Africa
- VE: Violent Extremism

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1 Introduction

The international community has recognized terrorism as one of today's biggest threats to international security, peace and development (UNSC, 2014) and some scholars acknowledge it as the “greatest test” of modern conflict resolution strategies (Miall et al., 2016:333). Terrorism has through history taken different forms and its occurrence has been categorized in four waves of modern terrorism since the 1880’s (Rapoport, 2011). The fourth wave, estimated from the Iranian revolution in 1979 to the present, includes unprecedented dimensions of religious aspects. Religion was politicized and now used to justify acts of terror, which complicates the proliferation and mutation of terrorism activities (Rapoport, 2011).

The world has seen a global increase in terrorism, its intensity and spread (IEP, 2017) over the past decades. Terror activity reached its peak in 2014 in number of fatalities, and has only for the first time been in a slight decline since 2016 (IEP, 2017). The multitude of consequences generated by terror advocating international organizations are transnational and include death, fear and migration (Miall et al., 2016; UNGA, 2015). The migratory ways are said to have two directions; one paved by civilians fleeing conflict affected territory to seek refuge and the other by those who are attracted to join the fight (UNGA, 2015). The latter are referred to as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and defined as individuals “who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training” (UNSC, 2014:2). FTFs constitute a heterogeneous group of individuals with varying reasons, ranging from under-stimulation to internalized radical views, for justifying the means used for, or occurrence of, terrorism (Jawaid, 2017; Koehler, 2016; Marsden, 2017).
Parallel to continuing recruitment, reports of disengaging FTFs have emerged (IEP, 2017; Koehler, 2016; Marsden, 2017; RAN, 2016). These disengaging recruits establish a third path in the migratory movement, as they return to their countries of origin. The return of FTFs constitutes both numerous security threats unless addressed appropriately, as well as significant potential in countering violent extremism (CVE) which urgently needs to be utilized (Horgan, 2009; Koehler, 2016; Marsden, 2017).

1.1 Research Problem

The return of FTFs is not a new phenomenon, but its gained momentum in the global scholarly discourse can be attributed to advancement in detecting and prosecuting terrorism offences as well as partial success of military offences resulting in battlefield loss or defeat of certain terrorist organizations (IEP, 2017; RAN, 2017). As ISIL, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and others are pushed to retreat, the number of returning FTFs to societies of origin is expected to increase, demanding the development of comprehensive, currently underutilized, strategies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs to be a prioritized matter on the security agenda.

Reintegrating returning FTFs is argued to be the sole solution to the potential threats returnees pose to public safety, ranging from continued radicalization and recruitment, motivation to reoffend and terrorism activity, often in an environment where radicalization initially occurred (Holmer & Shtuni, 2017; Marsden, 2017). It requires the societal motivation of receiving communities to facilitate the process, but cannot occur without the commitment of the returning FTF (Bertelsen, 2015; IEP, 2017; Koehler, 2016; Marsden, 2017). The returnee undergoes a continuous behavioral and cognitive process which, at high costs, risks being challenged and interrupted by internal and external factors (Marsden, 2017). The risks can be averted if developed strategies are
informed by returnees’ experiences from practice (Horgan, 2009; Koehler, 2016; Marsden, 2017). Yet, the concept of reintegration of FTFs has for long been undertheorized (Noricks, 2009; Koehler, 2016) and little empirical evidence is available concerning the reintegration process from a returning FTFs perspective (Marsden, 2017). The deficit is argued to be a result of scholarly preoccupation with developing theories and preventive measures for radicalization (Horgan, 2009; Noricks, 2009). As much as structural causes for violent extremism and radicalization need to be studied and theorized, the reintegration imperative simultaneously begs for the theoretical and empirical deficit to be addressed. This can only be done through continuous publication of research capturing the experience of the returnees and the essence of the reintegration process; the returnees sustained commitment to reintegration (Marsden, 2017; Kohler, 2016).

A country substantially affected by terrorism is Kenya. It is ranked at position 22 out of 163 countries surveyed on impact of terrorism in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2017, which is arguably due to the geographic proximity to Somalia where the al-Qaida affiliated terror group Al Shabaab seeks to create an Islamic state (ICG, 2014; Rapoport, 2011). Numerous fatal attacks have been carried out on Kenyan soil, targeting civilians and security forces in hijackings, public beheadings, and massacres in educational and other public facilities in order to spread terror (ICG, 2014; Guardian, 2017). The GTI uses four indicators to measure the impact of terrorism; number of casualties and injuries, incidents and damage due to terrorism (IEP, 2017), but does not account for the number of Kenyan FTFs participating in the Salafi-jihad in Somalia. The recruited Kenyan youth, driven by real as well as perceived socio-economic and religious-political grievances (Republic of Kenya, 2017), account for 25 per cent of the estimated 7000 Al Shabaab members (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017).
Following the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) deployed with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2011 to fight back the Islamic Court regime (ICG, 2014; Miall et al., 2016), the third migratory flow caused by terrorism has emerged with new vigor. Intentions of the returning FTFs range from retaliation and continued recruitment to hiding and reintegration (Republic of Kenya, 2017; Kenya Gazette, 2017). The Government of Kenya (GoK) criminalizes all acts of terrorism as well as affiliation with the same, but in 2014 an amnesty was offered to FTFs to incite disengagement (Kenya Law, 2015; NCTC, 2016; Ombati, 2015). Following the announcement of the amnesty, the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) published in 2016, recognized “hundreds of Kenyans leaving the ranks” (NCTC, 2016:26). An increasing number of these adolescents return to Kwale (Republic of Kenya, 2017).

The Kwale County Plan for Countering Violent Extremism (KCPCVE) launched in February 2017 is aligned with the national strategy and includes aspects of local rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives of returning FTFs. Formal and informal strategies are developed and implemented for enhancing reintegration, where engaged returnees face multiple challenges in sustaining commitment due to stigmatization, legal challenges, extrajudicial violence, harassment, retaliation from former comrades and interaction with the receiving communities where far from all are supportive (ICG, 2014; Republic of Kenya, 2017). Hence, Kwale presents an opportunity for theorizing the experienced commitment of returnees, what challenges are faced in the process and how these are addressed.

1.2 Relevance

The reintegration of returnees has long been argued to present the most effective opportunity to practice counterterrorism (Horgan, 2008). If the rising
number of FTFs is not appropriately addressed and the group unsuccessfully reintegrated, it will pose a direct and latent security threat to receiving communities with the potential to cause severe consequences in aggravating violent extremism (Republic of Kenya, 2017; Jawaid, 2017).

The practice of reintegration needs to be informed by returnees and scholars argue that “former terrorists are willing to speak about their experiences if one asks the correct questions” (Horgan, 2009:293, emphases by author). As much as FTFs compose a heterogeneous group and returnees cannot be argued to be representative of those who decide to stay with the terrorist organization, it is argued that answers to questions of “why” and “how” (Altier et al., 2014:648) might present representative similarities to inform processes of disengagement and reintegration.

The findings of the study contributes to the deficient literature on experiences of reintegration and contextual processes, and serve to inform future development of strategies in Kwale and elsewhere. More solid knowledge will also work to strengthen political will in implementing programmes, which empirical data could work to enhance. Furthermore, the findings will complement the chosen analytical framework, Life Psychology (introduced below) and contribute to develop its theoretical accuracy.

1.3 Objective and Research Questions
The objective of the study is to increase understanding for what makes returning FTFs commit to a sustained reintegration process. Specifically, the study seeks to examine why returnees commit to reintegration, what challenges are experienced in sustaining commitment and how challenges experienced are addressed by returning FTFs. For the purpose of the objective, Kwale is used as a case study in order to answer the following research questions;
• Why are returnees in Kwale committed to the reintegration process?
• What are the challenges in the reintegration process in Kwale, and how are these addressed by returnees?

1.4 Analytical Framework

The theoretical framework used to analyze the findings of this study is the Life Psychology framework, one of few existing scientific approaches addressing both the motivating factors for radicalization as well as components inducive of reintegration (Bertelsen, 2015). The framework constitutes the theoretical justification for the Aarhus Model, a Danish CVE initiative which incorporates a reintegration programme for returning FTFs in Aarhus, Denmark. Opponents criticize it as a “hug a terrorist” model (SBS, 2017) and supporters encourage it for its principles of inclusion, community ownership and non-stigmatization (Bertelsen, 2015; RAN, 2016).

The theory holds that general satisfaction with life, i.e. life embeddedness, is constituted by aligned capacity in relation to participation, attunement and perspective taking. The framework is inspired by, amongst others, the work of Csikszentmihályi (1990, ed. 2008) and the concept of flow for individual harmony and satisfaction. Life Psychology asserts that if capacity is unaligned or potential unsatisfied in relation to the surrounding environment, life embeddedness is threatened and all humans will seek to restore it through activism. For some, this leads to violent illegal radicalized activism (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016).

The motivating factors for radicalization, commonly known as push- and pull factors, do not directly reflect those of deradicalization, but are seen to be connected (Koehler, 2016:55). Furthermore, deradicalization is a process seen as a precondition for successful reintegration (Marsden, 2017). However, the Life Psychology portrays that even the radicalized individual will seek to
restore life embeddedness, making the model (see Figure 1) work in reverse (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016).

In this study, the Life Psychology framework and its concept of life embeddedness is used to categorize the process of reintegration in Kwale. It works to identify motivational aspects inciting returnees to commit to reintegration in Kwale. Furthermore, it illuminates aspects challenging the sustained commitment to the reintegration process and how these are addressed.

1.5 Methodological Framework

The chosen methodological framework for the conduct of the study is a qualitative case study approach, allowing a detailed study of Kwale in order to enhance understanding for the reintegration process (Creswell, 2013; Thomas & Mohan, 2015). Research in any given location facilitating reintegration of returnees is necessary in order to inform theory and policy development. Additionally, the selection of the case is justified due to its prominence in generation of FTFs recruited to Al Shabaab, subsequent reception of returning FTFs and implementation of reintegration programmes (Republic of Kenya, 2017).

The research takes on a constructionist ontological position and an interpretivist epistemological position; as social reality is seen as a construct of human interaction, the returning FTFs perceptions of their reality will allow to interpret the reintegration process in Kwale (Bryman, 2016). The relationship between research and theory is abductive, as the Life Psychology Framework is allowed to guide the study on the commitment to reintegration, illuminate the challenges experienced amongst the findings which will further be allowed to improve the theoretical framework (Bryman, 2016; Danermark et al., 2002).
Qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with the sample, obtained through a snowballing approach, allow the narratives of FTFs enrolled in a reintegration process in Kwale to inform the study of their commitment to reintegration as well as their perception of challenges faced (Bryman, 2017). The method is justified, as only a study of reintegration from the perspective of individuals undergoing the process can enhance understanding for the issue and contribute to the empirical evidence called for, which further allows research questions to be explored from the returnee’s perspective to arrive at the research objectives (Bryman, 2016; Thomas & Mohan, 2015; Marsden, 2017).

1.6 Disposition
The study is divided into eight chapters, including Introduction. The next chapter, Literature Review, will work to bring forth the contemporary debate and allows for clarification regarding the deficit in empirical evidence. Different concepts and conducted programmes will be introduced.

The third chapter, Analytical framework, begins by presenting the Life Psychology framework, its characteristics and explanation of life embeddedness. The framework will be operationalized in the Kwale context and its use as a guide and analytical tool will be introduced.

The fourth chapter presents the Methodological framework in depth.

The fifth chapter, Contextualization, will portray the contextual reintegration imperative in Kwale.

In the sixth chapter, Findings, the data collected from the field study will be introduced.

In chapter seven, Analysis, the findings presented in the previous chapter will be analyzed with the use of the Life Psychology framework. The research
questions will be answered and deviant factors beyond the Life Psychology framework will be discussed.

Finally, the eighth chapter, *Conclusion*, will summarize the findings of the analysis and elaborate on its implications on practices of strategy development for reintegration.
2 Literature Review

The 9/11 attacks fueled the global war on terrorism; a security oriented, hard approach to counter violent extremism and terrorism activity (Miall et al., 2016). IEP, the Institute of Economics and Peace which annually publishes the Global Terrorism Index, highlights that the international community has failed to reach a common definition of what terrorism means, let alone how to combat it (IEP, 2017). Within this discourse, uncompromising and punitive measures are advocated for and conflict resolution academics such as Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2016), highlight that realism oriented critics reject “talking to terrorists” as legitimizing violence (Miall et al., 2016:333). However, in the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN Secretary General notes that the preceding security-oriented approach has “not been sufficient to prevent the spread of violent extremism” (UNGA, 2015:2). Less diplomatically, scholars argue that the practice has proved futile in countering one of our times most complex security threats and instead proved more likely to provoke retaliatory violence (Miall et al., 2016). How programmes targeting FTFs should be carried out remains part of the highly politicized debate.

Parallel to calls for strict incarceration and institutional rehabilitation of returnees, counterarguments point to how criminalizing and stigmatizing returnees has been seen to undermine disengagement (Marsden, 2017) and how prison environment often serves to proliferate radicalization (Gunaratna, 2011). The Radicalization Awareness Network, a European Commission Directorate, admits that if all currently engaged FTFs were to return to their countries of origin, state capacity would be severely challenged in performing judicial procedures (RAN, 2016). Furthermore, not all terror affiliated FTFs can be proved to, nor have, engaged in violence (Holmer & Shtuni, 2017).

The latter point finds ground in the UNSC (2014) Resolution 2178 and its adopted definition of FTFs. It involves all guilty of “perpetration, planning, or
preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts” (UNSC, 2014:2) which does not differentiate between individuals who are radicalized and those who are not, who have not directly participated in combat or those who might have been trafficked. As the Resolution 2178 recognized a need for a multi-stakeholder approach for developing rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, it failed to take into consideration the plurality of the group this was urged for.

Researches, scholars and institutions alike recognize that incentives for a FTF to disengage vary as much as the motives stimulating radicalization in the first place (Artiel et al, 2014; Holmer & Shtuni, 2017; Koehler, 2016; RAN, 2016). Importantly, Noricks (2009:302), writing for the United States National Defense Research Institute, has argued that a common reason for radicalized individuals to stay with the extremist group is the absence of something to return to. This indicates the importance of the receiving society’s willingness to incite disengagement and deradicalization.

Horgan, psychologist and prominent scholar in terrorism studies, has written extensively on radicalization and deradicalization (see: Horgan, 2008; 2009; 2011; 2012; 2016) and interviewed numerous returnees from a range of radical extremist movements. In 2009, Horgan predicted an increase in attention to deradicalization, but stressed the necessity to distinguish between concepts such as disengagement and deradicalization. He illustrated that disengagement does not automatically entail deradicalization, but that the latter is not possible without the former (Horgan, 2009).

A cognitive and behavioral disengagement from violent extremism can be described as deradicalization, but a recent study published by Marsden (2017) highlights a difference between deradicalization and reintegration. She finds that the term deradicalization internalizes the issue to regard solely the individual who has been radicalized, overlooking structural causes inciting radicalization as well as the potential of externalities to facilitate
deradicalization (Marsden, 2017). Marsden advocates for the term reintegration to be adopted in the discourse, but notes that reintegration can occur without deradicalization taking place (2017).

Koehler, the author of “Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, tools and programmes for countering violent extremism” (2016), notes the deficit in deradicalization theories despite how programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration of extremists have been implemented in over 40 countries in the past decades (Koehler, 2016:290). Koehler (2016), along with Jawaid (2017) and others (Gunaratna, 2011; Holmer & Shtuni, 2017) have assessed programmes, mostly developed for the post-incarceration phase (Koehler, 2016), and conclude how they portray an incoherent range of similarities and differences, arguably due to the lack of generalizable theories or strategies for reintegration.

Hence, Koehler (2016) welcomes what he claims to be one of the first theory suggestions by Barrelle (2015). She developed a model for disengagement, “Pro-integration Model” (Barrelle, 2015:129), where the individual’s disengagement is defined by the engagement with the receiving society in 5 spheres, namely; identity, social relations, coping, ideology and action orientation (Barrelle, 2015). Barrelle argues that the level of engagement determines incitement for disengagement (2015). Koehler does not dismiss the welcomed contribution, but notes that the theoretical framework fails to acknowledge the psychological aspects of deradicalization (Koehler, 2016:80). The model is further not considered as a theoretical framework for this study, as it focuses primarily on the disengagement phase rather than the reintegration itself. Bertelsen’s model (see chapter 3, Analytical Framework), is found more appropriate for this study as it is the only theory addressing radicalization and deradicalization simultaneously, which works to inform both prevention and reintegration programmes implemented in an
individualistic context and yet is argued to be a generalizable theory (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016).

Notably, both Koehler (2016) and Marsden (2017) detect indications of promising outcomes of family involvement in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees. Nevertheless, it is important to note that family relations and roles are viewed and experienced differently in individualistic and collectivist societies. In the latter, one might assume that the close community extending beyond the immediate family plays an equivalently important part in reintegrating returnees. Mirahmadi’s recognition of communities being an “underutilized resource” (Mirahmadi, 2016:130) in building resilience against extremism is hence relevant. She further highlights that programmes demonstrate higher success levels when they constitute a bottom-up approach by being community-led and developed but where legitimacy is facilitated by the top-down support from local government and judiciary (Mirahmadi, 2016).

In their article on the Reintegration Imperative (2017), Holmer and Shtuni recognize that those who approach reintegration programmes “have already progressed a certain cognitive distance toward disengagement from the group and are actively seeking assistance” (Holmer & Shtuni, 2017:7) which demonstrates the necessity of developing informed programmes to attract those who have not disengaged nor deradicalized.

However, Marsden (2017:36) notes that the differing dynamics driving people in and out of extremism cannot be generalized and calls for more research regarding why returnees remain committed to reintegration in a continuously changing process in a context where the returnee is socially stigmatized, has opportunities limited, is socially excluded and, as in the case of Kwale, has their lives restricted by insecurity and sense of surveillance by those who might retaliate (Republic of Kenya, 2017). The importance of individual resilience in remaining disengaged, despite challenges faced in practice,
contributes to societal collective resilience to violent extremism and cannot be underemphasized (Marsden, 2017:112).

Very little is known about the ongoing processes of reintegration, and Kwale is no exception. Recent reports on CVE in Kwale elaborates on the implementation and development of programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees (Republic of Kenya, 2017; NCIC, 2017), but no reports on monitoring or process evaluation have been published. Koehler (2016), referring to a sharing the opinion with numerous experts (Koehler, 2016:30), notes that evaluative literature on reintegration processes is insufficient much due to lack of transparency as well as the fact that integration is a continuous process and many programmes are in their infant stages.

Marsden’s qualitative field research exclusively included the practitioners and mentors of previously incarcerated religiously radicalized individuals in the United Kingdom, and perhaps this is why she strongly urges more research where beneficiaries of interventions inform research (2017). She argues that even though comprehensive evaluation is inhibited, monitoring of the implementation of strategies is essential and can only be informed by those in the process of reintegrating (Marsden, 2017).

Despite the growing practice of conducting disengagement, deradicalization and reintegration programmes targeting FTFs, the conceptual practices could be argued to be as “undertheorized” (Noricks, 2009:299) as claimed nearly a decade ago.
3 Analytical Framework

This chapter will present the chosen analytical framework for this study, namely the Life Psychology framework. The categories which constitute the foundations for the theoretical framework will be introduced and elaborated on, seeing to important elements relevant for reintegration initiatives. Furthermore, the use of the analytical framework will be illustrated. The choice of the framework and its applicability will be justified by briefly introducing the Aarhus Model; the Danish counterterrorism initiative which incorporates reintegration of returning FTFs and for which the Life Psychology forms the theoretical rationale.

3.1 Life Psychology

The Life Psychology theoretical framework relies on the assumption that all humans seek to attain a good life (Bertelsen, 2015). A good life is obtained when an individual is able to manage life and all its challenges and tasks. This is possible if the level of challenges align with ones developed set of abilities and skills (Bertelsen, 2015). When level of skills and tasks are aligned in a state of flow, it creates a sense of internal satisfaction, security and harmony (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990, ed. 2008). This satisfaction is described as life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015).

Life embeddedness forms resilience against risks, threats and challenges (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). The definition of life embeddedness as adopted by the developer of the Life Psychology framework, professor Preben Bertelsen at Aarhus University, Denmark, draws on a multitude of scholars’ interdisciplinary ontological concepts regarding notions of trust, coherence, belonging, existentialism and security (see Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1995; Kruglanski, 2012; Laing, 1969; Polanyi, 1957, and others). The active aspiration for life embeddedness is enabled through abilities, i.e. the use of
skills, which are developed in order to handle and approach the range of opportunities for self-fulfillment and development as well as challenges and threats, i.e. tasks, life presents (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). The tasks and skills are argued to be fundamental and universal, irrespective of culture, gender, origin etcetera, as the aim for all human beings is to maintain life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015).

Life Psychology categorizes life embeddedness into three main groups; 1) participation, 2) attunement, and 3) perspective taking. According to the framework, these categories contain the aligned skills and tasks which creates the state of flow. However, as seen in Figure 1, external events such as exclusion, stigmatization or marginalization can challenge these categories, which creates a state of non-flow. If tasks are not challenging enough in relation to skills developed, an individual will experience a “frustrated surplus” (Bertelsen, 2016:5), i.e. frustrating non-flow, where tasks presented do not require meaningful use of skills. Similarly, if tasks are too challenging an individual experiences an “overwhelming deficit”, i.e. overwhelming non-flow, as one’s skills are not sufficient to handle tasks (Bertelsen, 2016:5).

Below follows a description of the three categories participation, attunement and perspective taking.
3.1.1 Participation

To obtain a satisfactory level of participation, inductive for life embeddedness, an individual will use developed skills to actively participate in the construct of his or her life. This means being part of a community where one has the capacity to develop social relationships; in which one can shape the framework for one’s own preferences and interests; where one can enroll in meaningful activities, e.g. interest groups or recreational activities; and, is able to influence one’s social environment (Bertelsen, 2016). Frustrating non-flow can occur if participation is disabled by deficit in support or when one is not acknowledged by the surroundings (Bertelsen, 2016). Overwhelming non-flow can occur when possibilities for participation are too complex for the developed skillset (Bertelsen, 2016).
3.1.2 Attunement
Life embeddedness entails the aligning of morals, beliefs and way of living with the surrounding reality. This is enabled when an individual is realistic, pragmatically sets goals and makes plans for how to use skills to successfully and efficiently arrive at those objectives, and when morals, norms and values are assessed as right and good in relation to the surrounding environment (Bertelsen, 2016). Frustrating non-flow can occur if the surrounding environment is insecure or chaotic, which makes aligning impossible. Overwhelming non-flow can occur if one is not able to be pragmatic in planning the future due to lack of clear agendas, when what is expected is confusing or not clearly perceived by the individual (Bertelsen, 2016).

3.1.3 Perspective Taking
Perspective taking entails the ability to understand one’s own and others’ perspectives, wants and needs (Bertelsen, 2016). Understanding others’ perspectives includes ability to develop empathy and to be able to sense and correspond to not verbally expressed signals from others. Individuals should develop understanding for the surrounding environment and its rules, regulations, systems and structures (Bertelsen, 2016). Frustrating non-flow can occur when not exposed to other perspectives, as one’s ability to understand others is not challenged. Overwhelming non-flow can occur when understanding and perspective taking is impossible due to unclear or insufficient information available (Bertelsen, 2016).

3.1.4 Threatened Life Embeddedness
When life embeddedness is threatened, the Life Psychology holds that any individual will resort to activities aimed at restoring the state of flow (2015). The reaction is argued to be natural and universal, undertaken through efforts
to either change one’s own life or the external surroundings through the use of skills (Bertelsen, 2015). A set of moderating factors are argued to determine how an individual will use skills to restore life embeddedness: if the factors are in a low-state mode, skills will be expressed through legal activity, but if in a high-state mode, one will turn to illegal activism or violent extremism (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). The factors are \textit{want}, \textit{ability}, \textit{doing}, \textit{possibilities} and \textit{being met}. Bertelsen (2016) describes \textit{want} as the expression of motivation and level of energy to use a skill; \textit{ability} as the internal, cognitive and practical capacity to use a skill; \textit{doing} as the actualizing or realizing action in using a skill; \textit{possibilities} as the external and structural factors such as norms and laws which guides ways to develop skills; and, \textit{being met} as having support or being acknowledged by society (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). Figure 1 portrays how these factors, in a high-state mode, can lead to radicalized activism.

\subsection*{3.1.5 Illegal Radicalized Activism}

The Life Psychology framework recognizes different types of extremism, and Bertelsen (2016) highlights how important it is to distinguish between non-violent and violent extremism. Violent extremism is defined as “[a]n intense desire for and/or pursuit of a universal and comprehensive change in own and common life, socially, culturally, and/or societally, by violent means - where the consideration for human coexistence is set aside” (Bertelsen, 2016:1). Above elaborated factors will determine which path the individual seeking to reconstruct life embeddedness will embark on. Some will resort to legal political or religious activity to restore or reconstruct life embeddedness. Others will move towards illegal activities which can escalate to illegal radicalized activism (Bertelsen, 2015). The latter group is divided into three types; individuals who dedicate themselves to the cause no matter the price of their actions; individuals who seek belonging as well as acknowledgement from others, accepting violence as a necessary costs for the actions required;
and individuals confused with direction in life who compensate this by seeking belonging (Bertelsen, 2016).

3.1.6 Reintegrating by restoring Life Embeddedness

As it is argued that it is a fundamental aspiration by all humans to actively direct competencies towards establishing fundamental life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015), this is an undertaking also exercised by individuals enrolled in radical activities and violent extremism. If ones tasks and skills are not, for varying reasons, aligned within the radical or extremist setting, one will perceive life embeddedness as threatened (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). Even individuals engaged in violent extremism will seek to reconstruct life embeddedness. The Life Psychology framework can hence be argued to work in reverse, where disengaging individuals are to be empowered with opportunities to develop skills to handle challenges faced in reintegration.

Needless to say, individuals who have committed crimes and violations of human rights should undergo appropriate legal and judicial procedures. However, in the events where evidence are not sufficient for a conviction or where FTFs have been pardoned with amnesty, it is essential that the individual is enabled to align skills and tasks to restore and reconstruct life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015). Bertelsen (2015) argues that building resilience through dialogue, education, counselling and other efforts will assist in transforming the moderating factors, which initially were in a high-state mode and triggered the individual to resort to radical illegal extremism, to low-risk mode in order to enable the individual to undertake legal activity and develop participation, attunement and perspective taking. Bertelsen argues that the Life Psychology framework demonstrates that this is possible and necessary (2015).
3.2 Use of Framework

The study adopts the main assumption of the Life Psychology framework regarding all individuals’ aspiration to restore or construct life embeddedness, and relates this with the process of reintegration. The framework will be used to illuminate practices undertaken in restoring and reconstructing life embeddedness, and how these are related to reintegration experienced by returning FTFs in Kwale. Hence, the analytical framework will be allowed to partially guide the design of interview guides for the semi-structured interviews in order to identify factors of relevance for the analysis. The gathered data will be interpreted and analyzed with the use of theoretical explanations derived from the Life Psychology model. Concepts and components will guide the categorization of the findings for the analysis, arriving at a reversed logical order of the Life Psychology framework.

The Life Psychology will be used to illuminate how restoring life embeddedness is related to reintegration and its driving motivations. The framework will help to identify and emphasize factors that motivate and challenge reintegration, by categorizing experiences described by FTFs in line with participation, attunement and perspective taking. Contextual challenges and opportunities in relation to wants, abilities, undertakings and doing, possibilities offered and taken, as well as how returnees are met in their respective communities will be highlighted, in order to see if moderation of factors will enable restoring life embeddedness as described in the Life Psychology framework.

Since the skills used to reconstruct life embeddedness are determined in relation to external structures and conditions, external actors and possibilities can contribute to a sense of flow or non-flow in life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2016). This highlights the importance of incorporating the view of stakeholders and actors in CVE initiatives and reintegration programmes as a complement to the experiences told by returnees.
3.3 Choice of Framework

Among the attempts to theorize deradicalization, demonstrated to be limited in numbers in chapter 2, Literature Review, Life Psychology distinguishes itself as a discipline addressing both motives driving radicalization and how these correspond with deradicalization without directly relating specific push and pull factors of the former to the latter. The argued generalizability (Bertelsen, 2015) of the Life Psychology motivates the choice of the framework for the analysis of this study.

The choice is further justified as the framework is argued to be useful in guiding the design of deradicalization and exit programmes. It currently offers the theoretical foundation for the Aarhus Model, an anti- and deradicalization initiative piloted in Aarhus, Denmark, in 2014 (RAN, 2016). The Model is implemented by a range of societal and security actors, targeting vulnerable or radicalized youth and works through principles of inclusion defined as active participation in the society (Bertelsen, 2015; RAN, 2016). The Aarhus Model includes elements of controlled information sharing among actors, stakeholders and practitioners, mentoring, civic education and networking, preventive dialogue with family and various communities (especially focusing on Muslim communities) and the voluntary Exit Programme.

Due to the sensitivity and security debate regarding the reintegration of returning FTFs, the Aarhus Model has not been conducted without critique. Critics find that it adopts an approach deemed too soft and the Aarhus Model has attracted attention as the “hug a terrorist” model (SBS, 2017). As the Model is still in its infant stages of operation, an assessment of its effectiveness and success is discouraged. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that after piloting the model Aarhus has portrayed figures indicating that half of the FTFs recruited since 2011, however only a few in numbers, have returned and none have since committed serious crimes (Jawaid, 2017; RAN, 2016).
theoretical foundation of the Aarhus Model presents a relevant framework for analysis of how reintegration is experienced by FTFs returning to origins elsewhere.
4 Methodological Framework

In this chapter, the methodological framework for this qualitative case study of reintegration in Kwale will be explained and justified. It begins with an explanation of the epistemological and ontological positions of the case study selected as well as the chosen abductive approach. This is followed by a description of chosen methods for the study, including snowball sampling, conduct of semi-structured interviews and data validation. The chapter discusses the limitation and delimitations in the research design, including availability of data, willingness of participants to take part in the study and security limitations, and concludes with an emphasis on ethical considerations due to the sensitive nature of the study.

4.1 Qualitative Case Study

This research is carried out as a qualitative field study, which is argued to be an applicable approach when studying phenomena on which little material has been published (Creswell, 2013).

A case study is argued to be appropriate as a method in order to analyze the process of reintegration when seeking answers to questions of why reintegration is committed to and how challenges are experienced (Bryman, 2016; Thomas & Mohan, 2015:306). It enables studying why decision are made, carried out and their outcome (Thomas & Mohan, 2015:301). Kwale as a case is justified due to it filling the criterion of a “unique” (Bryman, 2016:62) case in generating FTFs recruited to Al Shabaab, subsequent reception of returnees and prominence in implementation of informal and formal reintegration programmes (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Kwale is the first county in Kenya where an action plan for CVE was launched (Republic of Kenya, 2017).
The study is approached with an interpretivist epistemological position, as it seeks to understand the phenomena of reintegration by bringing forth the participants’ perceptions of their reality concerning context specific reintegration, without attributing Kwale characteristics of reintegration derived from the scholarly discourse or global imperative (Bryman, 2016). It takes on a constructionist ontological position as the characteristics of a social reality of reintegration are assumed to be a result of human interaction and construct, rather than assuming that the process would be externally enabled independently of its actors as objectivists would argue (Bryman, 2016).

Adopting above positions enables the research to form an abductive relationship to theory (Bryman, 2016).

4.2 Abductive Reasoning

Abduction is seen as the most suitable logic for the study; a conclusion based on an assessment of different concepts of reasoning (Bryman, 2016; Danermark et al., 2002). The inherent analytical constrains of deduction are deemed inadequate for the study, as no applicable theories in reintegration are presented for testing, and even if they were, would say “nothing new about reality” (Danermark et al., 2002:89). Inductive reasoning is inhibited due to the limited amount of observed empirical data to be theoretically generalized (Bryman, 2016; Danermark et al., 2002).

The chosen approach of abduction will inevitably enable the findings of this study to be influenced by a predetermined theory aimed to be used for the analysis, and hence argued not to result in a definite and validated conclusion (Danermark et al., 2002). The approach will, however, allow conclusions to be drawn in creative ways from the studied case of Kwale, as the Life Psychology analytical framework will not only be used to examine the case but so that contextual events make new revelations regarding the theory.
This is enabled through the “recontextualization” (Danermark et al., 2002:95) of reintegration; from how it is perceived in Denmark where the Life Psychology framework for the Aarhus Model was developed (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016), to the processes experienced in Kwale. It is interesting to approach the study with abductive reasoning, especially as this can be argued to "provide a possibility to see 'something’ as 'something else’" (Ugglæ, 1994, cited by Danermark et al. 2002:94), since the Life Psychology framework for radicalization is claimed to be applicable to use in reverse in order to understand the process of reintegration and interpreted as an action to restore life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015).

4.3 Snowball Sampling and Primary Data Collection

Methods used for data collection include snowball sampling of interviewees with which semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1 for complete list of interviewees), with open ended questions to move beyond descriptive ‘what’ responses (Bryman, 2016; Thomas and Mohan, 2015), were conducted (see Appendix 2 for Interview Guide). Prior and during field research stakeholders and actors relevant for the study were identified on national, sub-national and grass root level and at stakeholder meetings through non-participatory or minimally participatory observations (Bryman, 2016:437). The sample of interviewed returning FTFs was enabled through inquiry of sample made to identified key informants consisting of CVE practitioners. Focus group discussions were deemed inappropriate due to the sensitive nature of the study, as can be assumed that participants would express culturally and socially expected normative views (Bryman, 2016; Thomas and Mohan, 2015).

The non-participatory or minimally participatory observations availed for the purpose of sampling for this study included attendance at 4 key stakeholder meetings held in Kwale in April 2018, namely; 1) Youth Sensitization Forum at [anonymized] High School in Kwale; 2) the first Stakeholder Meeting for
the Operationalization of the KCPCVE following its launch in February 2017, during which the Kwale County CVE Forum (CCVEF) Secretariat was established; 3) Campaign Forum with Sheikhs and Sheikhat for religious leaders, and; 4) the first meeting of the Kwale County CVE Forum (CCVEF) Secretariat at the County Commission. During the meetings, relevant stakeholders were identified (For further information about meetings and objectives, see Appendix 3).

Twenty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted, of which 10 with key informants; FTFs labelled as returnees (R). Their accounts are complemented by 14 key stakeholders and actors involved in reintegration initiatives. Recognizing the importance of preserving the safety of all interviewees, identities have been anonymized. Interviewees from the public sector will be referred to by their actual or equivalent designation, in order to indicate their organizational perspectives yet preserve anonymity. Governmental sector and non-governmental sector is differentiated by referring to their respective sectors.

Of the interviewed 10 returnees, 6 are male and 4 are female, and their ages range from 24 to 50 years. All interviewed returnees identify as Muslim and all but two belong to the Digo ethnic group. All interviewed returnees indicated previous association with Al Shabaab or an affiliated group. Of the 10 returnees, 9 are part of the amnesty programme announced by the GoK in 2015 (Kenya Gazette, 2017) and 1 (R10) is an unregistered beneficiary of some implemented initiatives. Interpreter was used for 4 of the interviews (R2, R3, R8 and R10). The respondents requested interpreter to articulate their replies but all 4 understand English, which enabled them to validate the interpreter’s translation of their replies. Acknowledging the potential bias of an interpreter as well as the sensitivity of the topic, the interpreters included CVE practitioners chosen to translate by the interviewees themselves.
The sample of actors interviewed consists of 2 professors (P) with significant experience in research on CVE and reintegration in Kenya, 6 civil society actors (CSAs), ranging from volunteers in community based organizations (CBOs) to coordinators and executive directors of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), 1 distinguished religious leader (RL), 2 official actors (OAs) of which 1 on county level and 1 on national level, and 3 international actors (IAs).

The data collected was processed through transcribing interviews, followed by coding and conscious organization of the data in categories of community interaction, adjustment, understanding and difficulties faced, abductively guided but not lead by the analytical framework, Life Psychology, chosen for the study (Danermark et al., 2002; Thomas & Mohan, 2015).

4.4 Sources and their Validity

The primary source of data consists of the sample of returnees, which is limited and not easily accessible due to security reasons, and is complemented by interviews with stakeholders and actors. The multiple viewpoints used to confirm data accuracy and validate, when possible, the responses of interviewees, increase credibility of the results of the study (Thomas & Mohan, 2015). Review and analysis of primary and secondary data, including official documents and academic literature, will complement the data and work to increase an objective understanding for the phenomena of reintegration (Bryman, 2016). Hence, the study adopts data triangulation, as suggested by Yeasmin and Rahman (2012), not only to validate gathered data, but to increase understanding for the phenomena of reintegration in Kwale. Theoretical and methodological triangulation would arguably have worked to increase validity of the study, if theory and quantitative data were available.
(Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Data triangulation challenges any predetermined ideas and assists to avoid shaping the case study to a, by theory, predicted prophesy (Thomas & Mohan, 2015:322), but will not clear any inevitable contesting opinions or thoughts regarding the reintegration process, which will be recognized in the analysis. Nevertheless, the study sees no point in contesting the credibility of the experiences and perspectives of returnees, as the variety will work to thoroughly inform the design of reintegration initiatives, accounting for a vast range of concerns and implications.

4.5 Limitations and Delimitations

The study recognizes the limited data available, the sensitivity of the research topic and the theoretical deficit within the discourse of reintegrating FTFs. Furthermore, time constrain as well as declines to appeals of interviews limited the conduct of the study. Efforts were, for instance, made to speak to County Government Officials as well as Officials of the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), who reserved their right to decline requests of interviews. Both actors were informed about the opportunity to respond to the criticism raised against them in interviews with other respondents, which did not change their willingness to participate in the study. The sample of responding returnees was by the sampling process limited to include individuals identifying with being Muslim and Digo, with 2 exceptions not declaring identifying with a specific ethnic community. This limitation is not to ignore the fact that individuals identifying with other or no religion, from different socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic communities engage in violent extremism. Nevertheless, triangulating this occurrence revealed that the Digo community in Kwale is marginalized and represents a strong majority of individuals radicalized or joining Al Shabaab from that area (CSA1; CSA4; OA1; OA2; IA3).
The complexity of the violent extremism is not to be simplified, and joint, simultaneous approaches in CVE are encouraged. Not dismissing the value and necessity of other interventions, this study is delimited to the reintegration process facilitated locally in Kwale County. The study exclusively focuses on strategies developed for returnees pardoned with amnesty or those who have not been prosecuted or found guilty of terrorism offence according to Kenyan Law (Kenya Law, 2015). The study focuses only on the returning FTFs who have been associated with Al Shabaab, which delimits the study from including radicalized individuals who have joined the domestic secessionist group Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) or other domestic, regional or transnational extremist movements.

4.6 Ethical Considerations
Due to the sensitive nature of the study, conducted in a fragile and violent environment, ethical issues need detailed consideration (Cronin-Fruman and Lake, 2018). This section is guided by points developed by Diener and Crandall (1978, in Bryman, 2016) concerning harm to participants; informed consent; deception, and invasion of privacy.

Snowball sampling was enabled through ‘gatekeepers’ whose approvals could be argued to legitimize the inquiry of an interview (Thomas and Mohan, 2015:173), which stressed careful attention to power relations so that all respondents participate voluntarily (Cronin-Fruman and Lake, 2018) and fully aware of the objectives of the study (Bryman, 2016). The interviewed returnees were sampled on premises of being able to assess their reintegration process. In other words, interviews were not conducted with vulnerable individuals who had recently returned or were in the earlier process of reintegration. This reduced the risk of harm to participants as well as security (Bryman, 2016). Prior to interviews, conducted in neutral and safe settings,
assurances were made with ‘gatekeepers’ that the conduct would not pose a security threat to respondents, researcher or surroundings (Thomas and Mohan, 2015). Objective and continuous risk assessments was carried out with organizations cooperated with, which at no point compromised their own ethics of conduct (Cronin-Fruman and Lake, 2018), which was validated prior to commencing the field research through participation at a 2-day staff conference during which ethics and code of conduct were elaborated on as part of the quarterly report review. All respondents could at any time decline answering a question or withdraw from the interview. In accordance with Cronin-Fruman and Lake (2018) advice, a back-up plan was designed in case respondents would decide not to participate, i.e. shift the objectives to focus on the perspective of practitioners, which worked to mitigate the sense of urgency to conduct interviews.

The interviews were enabled through cooperation and association with local, grass roots organizations thoroughly made aware of the objectives of the study, in order to avoid misunderstanding concerning any benefits expected if participating in the study (Cronin-Fruman and Lake, 2018). This was emphasized with full enclosure, but despite confirmed informed oral consent it cannot be ignored, even though not brought to researcher’s attention, that participation can still be motivated by expectations (Cronin-Fruman and Lake, 2018).

Deceptive practices were not exercised, as the research requires disclosure of intention in order to allow truthful and authentic answers shared by participants. A strong and respectful stance was intention of learning from CVE practices in Kwale, which participants are an important part of, in order to develop strategies elsewhere. This self-interest was exercised with caution, not to violate the sentiments, culture or values of participants (Bryman, 2016).

Inevitably, it can be argued that any kind of qualitative research including interaction with persons beyond one’s own sphere of regular interaction, will
intrude on the privacy of others (Bryman, 2016). However, respectful practices with close attention to consent, integrity and anonymity reduces likelihood of harm caused (Bryman, 2016).
5 Contextualization
This section will briefly contextualize the reintegration imperative in Kwale as well as the effects of the announced amnesty, and is informed by interviews with actors and stakeholders as well as primary and secondary literature. It concludes with brief accounts of FTFs reasons to disengage from Al Shabaab prior to returning to Kwale.

5.1 Violent Extremism and Recruitment
The coastal county of Kwale has spearheaded the development of strategies to counter violent extremism in Kenya, as it was the first county to develop and align a local strategy with the NSCVE (Republic of Kenya, 2017). The Kwale County Plan for Countering Violent Extremism (KCPCVE), launched in February 2017, is aimed to guide the multi-stakeholder approach in CVE in the county. It is divided in to preventive and curative efforts in which areas of responsibilities are allocated to a range of actors and stakeholders. The reintegration effort stage addresses the reintegration challenge and the responsibility is assigned county and government officials, but avails room for cooperation with “strategic partners” (Republic of Kenya, 2017:53). The latter is not in law amendable, as association with FTFs is illegal unless the returning FTFs have obtained amnesty. However, the amnesty, which was declared by the President in 2014, is not Gazetted and has hence not been formally adopted as a law-abiding policy.

Subsequent to the announced amnesty, the International Office of Migration (IOM) together with government officials and civil society actors introduced a livelihood programme targeting returnees, where 48 beneficiaries were chosen to receive counselling and livelihood alternatives such as boda-bodas [motorcycles] or tuk-tuks [auto rickshaws] for operating transport businesses and refrigerators and freezers for fish vending (CSA1; CSA5; CSA6; P2; IA1).
The effort is described as a disaster due to the identities of the, with amnesty pardoned, returnees were made public, provoking retaliatory attacks by returnees who were not availed the same opportunities, or whom perceived returning FTFs as traitors (BRICS, 2016; P1; P2). Actors explain that this triggered a wave of killings of returnees, which sporadically has lasted up to date with the latest killings in Kwale reported in April and May of 2018 (Guardian, 2017, Capital News, 2017, Mwabege, 2016). Some actors suggest that the conduct of the programme might have been a strategy for the problem to be “taken care of” (P1; P2) by returnees themselves, but remains an unconfirmed speculation. The insecurity has been countered with firm security measures by government officials, culminating in extrajudicial violence, killings and disappearances.

In this environment, including religious settings and educational facilities, youth and adults alike are enlisted and radicalized by Al Shabaab recruiters and returning FTFs (BRICS, 2016; CSAs; OAs; Rs). Parallel to the ongoing recruitment, FTFs disengage from Al Shabaab; some for retaliatory reasons and others with the intention to reintegrate. The latter is observed among interviewees of this study and inducive reasons summarized below.

5.2 Reasons to Disengage
Reasons to disengage vary among respondents. Some experience discrimination in the ranks and tasks assigned in comparison to Somalis, others experience disillusionment with the cause as they learn that the picture painted to them prior to joining the group does not correspond with reality. The latter concerns expectations in pay, the risk of killing fellow Muslim countrymen among the KDF deployed in Somalia and the way in which jihad is proclaimed and actualized. Some interviewees indicate missing family and all interviewed
FTFs imply longing for security and acceptance (R1; R2; R7; OA1; S1; P2; CSA2; CSA4; CSA5).

Returning FTFs who were lured to join Al Shabaab on false pretenses, including trafficked or deceived when intending to assist a recruited family member return, did not seek reasons but ways to disengage; R5, R9 and R10 managed to disengage and escape with the help from unknown individuals.

Regardless of reasons and ways to disengage, many of the interviewed returning FTFs express a strong fear for Al Shabaab left behind as well as a fear of what they will face when returning to their respective communities in Kwale.
6 Findings
This chapter will present empirical findings compiled of interviews with returnees, stakeholders and actors as well as reviews of primary and secondary data. The findings are chronologically organized and begin in the initial stages of their reintegration process as FTFs return to Kwale, followed by an introduction of amnesty implications and how returnees engage in the reintegration process. The returnees’ interpretations of experiences are emphasized, but stakeholders’ and community actors’ perspectives are included for triangulation and verification due to their importance in facilitating the reintegration process.

6.1 Returning Home
Once back in Kwale, the returning FTFs faced multiple challenges. These included difficulties in rejoining communities as well as possible acts of retaliation from radicals who return not intending to reintegrate. For many, returning to communities hence became a gradual process during which they initially lived in hiding. None of the respondents publicly disclosed nor confirmed rumors regarding their affiliation with Al Shabaab, but most returnees declare being met with suspicion and resentment due to rumors circulating within their communities (R1; R6; R7). R2 and R8 were welcomed back by family but explain being avoided by community members. In contrast, when R10 returned home in 2015, her family rejected her. She retells staying indoors, afraid of being killed due to how the community was speculating regarding her association with Al Shabaab. She was forced to relocate to a new area where her background remained unknown. Respondents R3, R4 and R5 were able to join their communities directly on return, as their affiliation with Al Shabaab remained unknown. All returnees display a longing for acceptance by community, but express fear to engage with community members (R2; R6; R7; R9; R10).
Actors describe returning FTFs as rightfully “suspicious” (CSA3; OA1) perceived as security threats that many community members are not hesitant to expose to security agents (CSA1; CSA3; CSA4; CSA5; CSA6; OA1; OA2). Societal resentment is acknowledged in making returnees unsure of who they can turn to (CSA1), but it is known that many first turn to families and their immediate social network, including religious communities; “Those are the houses that they run to first” (CSA3; CSA5). CSA5, a local peace committee member, explains that this initial network is where civil society actors engage in dialogue, helping families convince returnees to “embrace amnesty” (CSA5) and a religious leader discloses that many returnees frequently visit mosques once back in communities (RL1). However, an actor states that “community preparedness for reintegration of these people is still very low” (CSA4) and others note that communities often stigmatize those related to recruits and returnees (P1; OA2). Families are stigmatized and accused of “eating from the profits” of terrorism (P2), of perceiving returnees as heroes (OA1) and of hiding returnees (CSA3). This is argued to compromise deradicalization and reintegration programmes, as it is important for security and community to know who enrolls in the reintegration process and with what motives (IA1; OA1; OA2).

6.2 The Amnesty
All interviewed returnees indicate a wish to join their communities again and all but one (R10, due to fear) has obtained amnesty. The conduct of practices under the amnesty and related programmes has presented opportunities and severe challenges to beneficiaries.

Returnees have been able to engage with the government in a way that otherwise would not have been possible (R1; CSA3; OA1). Prior to the announcement of the amnesty programme (Kenya Gazette, 2017), some returnees were approached and engaged in dialogue with government officials
and civil society actors (R1, R6). Actors confirm having engaged in identifying and profiling returnees on behalf of the government (CSA1; CSA4; CSA6). CSA6 engaged with returnees whom on return to Kenya were hiding prior to surrendering, and says; “It’s very risky to meet someone with an AK47 in a forest” (CSA6).

One of the respondents says he has received a motorcycle through the programme (R2), others say it has opened a platform for counselling and support (R9; R10) and some refer to a land cultivation project enabling a collective of returnees to engage in farming (R4; CSA1; CSA6).

However, all respondents are critical to how the practice has been carried out and stress that a legal framework for the amnesty is missing. R7 explains; “Since 2015, we have that concept, but is not a policy”. The missing policies are stated as the reason to why many returning FTFs disregard obtaining amnesty, which in turn has caused cleavages among the returnees. Fear and envy regarding livelihood alternatives provided to returnees enrolled in the amnesty programmes, whose identities have not been anonymized, induce retaliation by other returnees (R4; CSA; CSA2). The latter group can be categorized in returnees who are either afraid to enroll, those awaiting appropriate time to enroll meanwhile fearing being identified by amnesty-protected returnees, or those who are simply unwilling to reintegrate and accuse others of betrayal (OA1; OA3; CSA3; CSA6).

In addition, all returnees accuse security agents for using excessive force and extrajudicial killings targeting returnees. The representative for the County Commission, under which the mandate of security officials is established, states that the County Commission “does not give them instructions on what to do on their day to day activities” and “only gives them instructions on policy” (OA1). He states that arrests of returning FTFs engaged in criminal activities or those not enrolled in amnesty might make some believe that returnees specifically are harassed (OA1). Furthermore, local elders [respected
informal community leaders] and peace committee members with relations to security officials have been killed by, allegedly, returnees (CSA1; CSA2; Mwabege, 2016).

All actors and stakeholders express concerns for how spoilers approach the programmes, but rely on identification conducted by the government and civil society, and the County Commission representative states; “We have a way of finding out whether he is a genuine one or not” (OA1). In addition, a professor states “it wasn’t effective because the government was not prepared to have a long-term view of the amnesty” (P1). Several actors engaging in reintegration initiatives believe that returnees accept amnesty only in the absence of other alternatives; “They know they will be killed if they don’t” (OA2; CSA2; CSA4; CSA5). The county official confirms that returnees who do not obtain amnesty are arrested and prosecuted (OA1).

6.3 Engaging with Communities

Many respondents participate as active community members, engaged in CVE initiatives to prevent radicalization. R1 describes himself as an activist who participated in forming a local organization for returnees. The organization is registered and supported by an established CSO in the area, and committed returnees are described as “change agents” (CSA6). Furthermore, returnees partake in integration programmes such as football tournaments enabling returnees and officers from the law enforcement to interact in order to mitigate cleavages, others actively participate in preventive initiatives targeting youth vulnerable to recruitment (R1; R6; R7). R7 participates as an active community member by “going to peace forums, chief barazas [public meetings], weddings, burials, to sit in mosque and advice young brothers” (R7). R9 and R10 has received support and counselling through the programmes. Some of the returnees interviewed participate in their communities in the roles of parents; R2 and R7 have since their return gotten
married and had children, which has worked to enhance their community participation.

Actors interviewed express certain expectations regarding how returning FTFs should act when returning to communities. Many note how returnees “isolate” themselves from social settings (CSA1; CSA2; CSA4; CSA5). Hence, initiatives are designed with youth leaders and madrasa [Islamic educational institution] leaders, who are believed to be mentors and “the confidants of the people who return” (CSA3). Furthermore, returnees are assisted in obtaining “government services so that they can [...] apply for grants to start income generating activities” (CSA3). It is noted that many returnees are not educated (CSA1; CSA5; OA1), however socioeconomic status is not a determinant for recruitment or radicalization (Marsden, 2016; RAN, 2016). Nevertheless, a county official argues that returnees lack capacity, knowledge, education and tools to “restart their lives” and asserts that the government takes responsibility in capacity building and availing tools for development (OA1). In return, he states that they “expect them to take advantage of the skills to better their lives” (OA1). A religious leader emphasizes that some returnees are educated carpenters, masonries, electricians, some have driver’s licenses “so it’s a part of the puzzle for us to find ways in which we can help” (RL1) in encouraging developing and actualizing skills in practice. He believes that if returnees are given financial incentives, they are more encouraged to commit to reintegration and not turn to criminal activities (RL1). A professor confirms that livelihood alternatives provided incite reintegration (P1).

Some actors have noted that CVE and reintegration initiatives are by many only seen as a sector for employment, resulting in “a lot of competition, a lot of duplication” (CSA6) among stakeholders. It is emphasized that the work “should be genuine” (CSA6) and “[w]hen you do something, you need to do it from your heart” (CSA1). Returnees are encouraged to work with CVE initiatives, as they are key in informing the design of programmes (OA2) and
possess “battle field intelligence […] that would never be shared with law enforcement and security” (IA1).

However, P1 discusses a notion of polarization between the “different segmentations of society”; i.e. beneficiaries and practitioners, retelling how national figures engaged in reintegration initiatives display prejudice using “a lot of stereotypes in defining the people that they [are] supposed to have interventions with” (P1), which discourages cooperation. Furthermore, some actors acknowledge societal failure “to offer [returnees] a sense of belonging” (CSA1; CSA2; CSA3) and “[f]eeling loved” (CSA3).

6.4 Conforming to Reintegration

Some of the respondents describe rehabilitation, cognitive and behavioral, through counselling or participation in various activities, which has enabled them to readjust morals, beliefs or values to align those of their respective communities. R9 states; “I didn’t feel like talking, I didn’t feel like telling anyone anything”, until she was encouraged to participate in a forum for victims of violent extremism, where she received counselling. R10 retells that she used to “have so many nightmares, the flashbacks of what happened” and is grateful for the counselling and support from the women’s network. R3 explains that despite difficulties faced since returning from Somalia, she would never return. She finds that it is better to “die at home rather than to die outside”, referring to challenges at home in comparison with those in Somalia (R3).

Others express discontent or similar sentiments and perceptions of grievances as prior to joining Al Shabaab. Despite his activism in the community, R1 still indicates a strong sense of obedience to leader figures. He explains he would not hesitate to rejoin if a prominent leader in his religious community was to encourage engaging with Al Shabaab. R4 refers to the contingent nature of
humans, and since “a human can change at any time” he cannot assure he would not opt out of the reintegration process. He struggles with what he describes as “wrong” ways of living among his country men, who do not “follow the rules of Allah” (R4). He also states that if extrajudicial killings continue and more individuals enrolled in, or affiliated with, amnesty are killed “by the Government”, he will see no other option than to leave. R7 says that he has considered going back to Somalia, but refrains from rejoining as he is reluctant “to see fighting [and] to shed a lot of blood”.

A UNODC representative believes commitment to reintegrate can be categorized either as “egocentric security reasons” by individuals who do not give up ideological believes, or a “change of mind” where recruitment was not ideologically motivated (IA1). Some civil society actors believe returnees commit to reintegration due to them being “young when recruited” (CSA1) and as they have grown, they “welcome new things in life, like family” (CSA3). According to actors, they engage returnees in actively deciding and planning their own futures; CSA6 explains that “[b]ecause they were in another world and now they came back” it is important to ask “[w]hat do they want to do for a living?”.

Former ideologically motivated recruits imply they could, in certain circumstances, rejoin Al Shabaab. This implies importance in working with ideological sentiments, which is often carried out through counter-narratives. Actors express differing opinions regarding the approach, stating that “their entry point is actually to challenge the jihad” in religious spaces, which he argues could do more harm than good among those ideologically radicalized (P1). He confirms that he has “never met a returnee who says that if a jihad is called by the competent Muslim leader, they would not participate in it because fighting is wrong”. He assures “if they find another place that interprets jihad properly, they will be prepared actually to participate in it again” (P1). In addition; CSA3 expresses fear that when recruited, returnees felt “they are
loved, they are liked, they are listened to” which might motivate rejoining (CSA3).

6.5 Developing Understanding for Community Perception

Some interviewees portray understanding for how communities and officials perceive them (R1; R9), whereas others have not reflected on others’ perceptions of them (R3; R5; R8). All returnees express a longing for acceptance. Whereas some think they should be met differently, i.e. receive more understanding and support (R3; R4), others understand how communities’ perceptions affect their efforts (R1; R6; R7; R9). In addition, some returnees express understanding for their role and responsibility in reintegration (R1; R2; R6; R9).

R4 says he has not undergone a change since he returned; “I left the fight, but I didn’t change. I am a Muslim and I will remain so until my death” and elaborates on his held belief that “[a]ll non-Muslims are thinking that Muslims are terrorists”. R1 acknowledges the receiving communities and the governments fear of returnees, but encourages mutual trust by lowering levels of fear; “It’s not good for a man or a woman to live in fear all the time. Or to live in the bush all the time, like an animal.” He encourages unconditional support of returnees, even in the event of setbacks; “[e]ither they [the efforts] work or they don’t work, but [the community] should embrace them [returnees]”. He continues, “Even a mad person, if you embraced him, he will see you’re a good person. So you can shave him, you can take of his clothes and be washed, and he can embrace you. But if you see a mad person and always you are chasing him away, when he sees you, he will run” (R1). R9 further addresses practitioners in CVE initiatives when she says; “[t]hey don’t have to give up on us, even if we are too hard to understand. But they have to give us their benefit of that doubt, to listen to us, to hear us, even if we make
trouble, they have to bear with us.” She portrays a strong commitment to help others who have been in her situation and stresses the need to assure returning FTFs and victims of terror that they are not alone in their “suffering”, which gives her a sense of fulfillment (R9).

R8 explains how he, despite difficulties, feels loved by his family. In return, his commitment to his family, including parents, 2 wives and 11 children, makes him commit to reintegration. R2 indicates feelings of owing community and family his contribution, social and financial, in order to be accepted back into the community. He explains it has been hard for him to connect with the community again, and that the resentment he perceives from the community was not what he expected. He elaborates on his sense of exclusion; “When I go to the football like here, I can sit alone” and expresses a wish for the community to know he is a good person and that he regrets he joined Al Shabaab.

R7 says he received help from a local human rights organization to understand his rights, which equipped him with knowledge to use when confronted by the law enforcement. CSA1, CSA4 and CSA6 confirm how volunteers and organizations have worked to raise returnees’ knowledge of human rights.

County officials acknowledge that stigmatization is an issue (OA1) and hence, actors emphasize how reintegration “has to be done in two ways” (CSA4) by “preparing the community to understand that these people […] need our support” and “the foreign fighters, returnees, defectors, to know that the community that they want to […] reintegrate with, would not view them as they did before” (CSA4). Managing expectations of returnees and communities alike is seen as essential (CSA1; CSA2; CSA4; CSA6).

Some actors advocate for compassion and understanding (CSA1) and highlights how returnees want to reintegrate despite fear, because they “want to be safe” (CSA2), which indicates commitment (CSA3). Some actors
describe a sense of responsibility; “they are our youth” (CSA6), and a will to help the ones who are “a part of our communities, our families” (RL1). Others emphasize a “human rights perspective” from which victims’ reconciliation need to be prioritized before offering returning FTFs “blanket amnesties” (CSA4). A representative for an international security think tank further emphasizes that amnesty should not be availed to criminals; returnees who either committed criminal acts prior to their affiliation with Al Shabaab, or those who resorted to criminal activity ones back in Kenya. A UNODC representative elaborates on how the “fine line” between what is or is not appropriate in conduct of reintegration programmes and stresses the need to ask; “What is the bigger objective for security?” (IA1).

6.6 Trust
Besides the lack of policies guiding the amnesty and reintegration initiatives, a challenge that emerges from interviews with all returnees is the lack of trust. Trust between returning FTFs and community members as well as trust between different groups of returnees is fragile. The lack of legal structures for the reintegration process is highlighted by actors as undermining the practice, which arguably amplifies the sense of lacking trust between all actors, practitioners and beneficiaries.

The level of trust indicated by returning FTFs varies from non-existent to high towards different actors and community members, but overall, they trust only a few close individuals such as sheikhs and religious leaders (R1), family (R1; R2; R3; R4) or close community members (R5; R9; R10). R7 says he does not trust anyone. R9 stresses the importance of a returnee to trust in order to heal; “When you remove what you have inside, the torture inside you […] [y]ou feel good, you can feel free” (R9).
Stakeholders and actors recognize that returnees trust “people who they believe can help them” (RL1) and the ones who “took time to win their hearts, and win their trust” (CSA1). County officials acknowledge that returnees do not trust government agents, i.e. the County Commission or security officials, and actors emphasize how many returnees fear judicial procedures even when pleading guilty to gain amnesty. The “biggest challenge for the returnee” remains to know “who is genuine or not” (CSA4; P1) and for the actors to know if returnees remain a threat or if they “return for legitimate reasons” (IA1). Notably, some actors acknowledge that returnees trust the County Government (CSA4), as it is elected and “constituted by locals” (CSA4; P2). The same actors, however, find that the County Government of Kwale seems “uninterested politically” (CSA4; CSA5), portrays “no commitment” (CSA4; CSA6). It is argued that the County Government refers to the New Constitution of 2010 (Kenya Law, 2010) according to which security matters fall under the national governments jurisdiction (P1; BRICS, 2016), but actors are critical regarding how they “narrow their definition of security to regard solely crime” (P1), interpreting CVE and reintegration as beyond their mandate (P1; IA3).

6.7 Legal framework and Structure for Coordination

All returnees have elaborated on the missing legal frameworks implications on their security, trust and ultimately ability to reintegrate, but refer the matter to actors and stakeholders, who in turn concur with it posing the biggest challenge for engaging with returnees. Some call for structure and coordination among actors (CSA1; CSA3; CSA5), will from national officials (CSA6; P2) and clear legal guidelines (CSA4; RL1; P1; P2). An actor refers to the Prevention of Terrorism Act criminalizing association with terror suspects (Kenya Law, 2015) restricting engagement with returnees as it is seen as “facilitating or sympathizing” (CSA4). Yet, civil society actors defyingly conduct grass root initiatives as they await law amendments “so that they
respond to the real situation on the ground” (CSA4; CSA6). Local actors and an international think-tank representative advocate for CVE objectives to be incorporated in the Kwale County Integrated Development Plan for it to be prioritized (CSA3; CSA4; IA3). CSA3 emphasizes that “[w]e’ll use less time, less resources, but achieve more” if a coordinated approach is committed to by all actors and stakeholders. NCTC is referred to as “failing the society” (CSA6) in not allocating financial support to initiatives (P1; P2), not carrying out its mandate under the Prevention of Terrorism Act Article 40B (2) (Kenya Law, 2015) to co-ordinate national counter-terrorism efforts nor developing coordinated strategies (CSA4, CSA6).

An international actor expresses a willingness to assist the GoK in reintegration initiatives, but as a legal framework is yet to be presented for assessment and evaluation, “material restrictions” (IA2) legally confine association with reintegration programmes. The UNODC states that international actors can assists states and domestic stakeholders, but that the government needs to commit to understand the dynamics and to implement a process of change (IA1).
7 Analysis

The following analysis adopts the central assumption of the Life Psychology framework; that all individuals exercise agency in restoring life embeddedness when experiencing it to be threatened or in a state of non-flow (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). A disengaging FTF is seen to restore life embeddedness, and the optimal state of flow, through reintegrating in the communities they return to.

Reintegration will be assumed to entail 1) participation; creating a sense of belonging through actively taking part in the community, 2) attunement; adjusting morals and beliefs to the community, and 3) perspective taking; developing understanding for others as well as the FTFs own part in the community (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). The moderating factors for the outcome, of each category respectively, is demonstrated by the FTF’s want, ability, doing, possibility and being met. Want is a sentiment of willingness expressed by the returning FTF, and ability is their internal, individual capacity. Doing constitutes the actions undertaken. Possibility refers to how the FTF access opportunities offered through external factors such as laws, norms and societal structures and being met is used as a reference to other acknowledging the returning FTF.

Through this analysis, the answers to the research question ‘Why are returnees in Kwale committed to the reintegration process?’ will be illuminated. The identified commitment will work to identify challenges faced and how, or if, these are addressed. This will contribute to answering the second research question ‘What are the challenges in the reintegration process in Kwale, and how are these addressed by returnees?’. Additional deviant factors that emerge as challenges but do not present data supported by the Life Psychology framework include the notion of trust, structural challenges and aspects of attunement, which will be discussed.
7.1  Commitment to Reintegration

As reintegration is assumed to entail participation, attunement and perspective taking as the returning FTF aspire to restore life embeddedness (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016), each category will be discussed below. It is worth noting that the cost-benefit analysis made by a FTF deciding to leave Al Shabaab and return to Kwale, despite the life-threatening risks this poses, portrays high levels of will to return, but says little about why they want to reintegrate. All respondents, including R10 who is not officially enrolled in the amnesty, have benefitted from amnesty programmes. It is the only legitimate way for returning FTFs to reintegrate, acknowledged by the returnees and actors alike. Being pardoned with amnesty is hence seen as the first, inevitable step in the process of reintegration and will not be analyzed per se, but the associated subsequent experiences and challenges will be elaborated on.

7.1.1  Participation

Participation entails, according to the Life Psychology, being an active member of a community, in which one partakes in meaningful activities, develops skills and relationships as well as exercise positive social influence (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). FTFs participation will be assessed by their want to participate, their ability to participate, how they participate (doing), possibilities to participate and how they are being met in participating. What challenges are faced will be discussed in relation to respective factor.

All interviewed FTFs express a want to join their communities again, observable by seeing to how all indicate wanting to be accepted. The respondents assert a desire to join their families again and to obtain a sense of security. However, the authenticity of expressed want to participate is challenged by the lack of other options for communal participation than to obtain amnesty.
Interviewed FTFs demonstrate an ability to actively participate by creating a sense of belonging in their communities. Returning FTFs engage in CVE initiatives, which enables them to socially influence their surrounding environment and therefore enhance their participation. It is acknowledged, by returnees and actors alike, that returnees are able to contribute to CVE due to their first-hand experience in radicalization and violent extremism. The actual participation, i.e. doing, is portrayed by participation in recreational activities with fellow community members. This bridges between different segments of the society but is challenged by publicly displayed resentment experienced by some of the returnees, making some FTFs withdraw from social settings.

The possibility to participate is initially offered through the amnesty. It is the primary enabler to societal participation, which is secondarily enabled by civil society actors offering assistance in gaining access to government services. Government actors are seen to assume responsibility in providing possibilities through vocational training, education and employment opportunities, but seem to trust that possibilities are already availed. This challenges participation, as the returning FTFs are expected to seize opportunities they do not perceive available to them, e.g. university enrollment and employment. Furthermore, returnees portray an inclination to supporting provision of economic incentives in encouraging participation and reintegration, and the sentiment is shared with some local actors. External actors on the other hand believe it undermines the reintegration process, with reference to the implications of providing returnees livelihood alternatives in a society where many experience marginalization, discrimination and inequality (Republic of Kenya, 2017); conditions which fuel illegal radicalized activism in the first place.

Being met entails being acknowledged and supported, which only few of the returning FTFs experience via family members or civil society actors who engage FTFs in dialogue with the government and stakeholders. However, the
majority are met with resentment by family, who risk stigmatization if associating publicly with returning FTFs. This is exemplified to the utmost extent as R10 is rejected by her family and forced to relocate fearing for her life.

In conclusion, the studied sample express want and ability to participate, which enables them to exercise agency in obtaining societal acceptance and reconciliation with their families. Furthermore, some returnees portray a strong inclination to help others who share their experiences as well as obtain livelihood alternatives provided. However, possibilities are structurally challenged by insecurity, opportunities being out of reach, and how returning FTFs are met with a deficit in support and acknowledgement as they attempt to participate. Many are rejected or isolated.

7.1.2 Attunement
Restoring life embeddedness requires the FTF to attune, i.e. pragmatically align beliefs, morals and way of living with the surrounding reality as well as plan realistic goals along with ways of arriving at those objectives (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). A FTFs attunement will be analyzed by their expressed want and ability to attune, actualizing attunement (doing), possibility to attune and how they are met while attuning. Challenges related to respective factors will be discussed.

All interviewed FTFs have portrayed a willingness, i.e. want, to attune their behaviors to their respective surroundings, by leaving criminal lifestyles or gradually returning to their communities. Furthermore, it is suggested that as young recruits grow older, their development, maturity and plans for the future will make them want to attune to a life in their communities. However, the FTFs ability to attune beliefs can be doubted. Some make a cost-benefit analysis of rejoining Al Shabaab, evidently in the favor of staying as costs to
enlist are currently deemed too high. Furthermore, the applicability of the concept of attunement, including doing, can be questioned. FTFs who were ideologically motivated to join Al Shabaab express inclinations to rejoin the group if jihad is encouraged, which at first glance indicates inability to attune morals and beliefs if deradicalization is expected by their communities. However, attuning morals and beliefs regarding ideology might not be necessary if the community members share radical extremist sentiments.

The possibility to attune is dependent on external factors, such as counselling and support, which is availed to returnees by civil society actors. Receiving psychosocial support in reintegration has worked to rehabilitate some interviewees. The possibility is challenged by the state of insecurity in Kwale. Recent killings of returnees and civil society actors, committed by security officials and returnees with no intention to reintegrate, create an insecure environment undermining possibility to attune skills and believes with their surroundings.

*Being met* and acknowledged while attuning is seen as some dedicated civil society actors support the FTFs. Some returning FTFs are approached by other returnees also in the process of attuning, which can be assumed supportive. However, the ideologically radicalized individuals are often met by counter narratives. These are described to challenge an ideology which a returnee is not yet, and might never be, ready to discharge.

It can be concluded that the sampled FTFs attune their way of living with the communities they return to in order to obtain stability, security or because cost of returning to Al Shabaab is deemed to high. Possibilities and support to attune are partially accessed, through the support of fellow returnees and dedicated community members, but challenged due to insecurities. FTFs interviewed seem willing to attune behavior, but unable or not required to attune beliefs; either they preserve ideologies in a non-radical setting, or the radical sentiments are shared in communities which does not require attuning.
None of the ideologically motivated FTFs interviewed for this study, nor radicalized individuals whom responding actors have engaged with, indicate abandoning their radicalized ideology. Jihad remains justified, but returning FTFs believe the way it was carried out in Somalia was wrong.

7.1.3 Perspective Taking
Restoring life embeddedness requires the individual to both develop an understanding for their own wants and needs as well as those of others. The perspective taking entails developing empathy for others, ability to perceive not verbally expressed signals from the surroundings and understanding for societal structures (Bertelsen, 2015; 2016). The FTFs perspective taking will be assessed by their want and ability in relation to perspective taking, how they take others’ perspectives into account (doing) and how this is met by others. Challenges in relation to each factor will be discussed.

Returnees interviewed reflect on their wants and needs and those of their fellow returnees, but do not consider the wants and needs of the receiving communities. Returning FTFs long for acceptance, and want to feel taken care of and cared for, and their advice for conduct of practices is directed towards the communities.

Much in the communities’ reception of a returning FTF is not verbally expressed to the returnee. Fear is not articulated, yet understood by all returnees. This portrays an ability to sense not verbally expressed signals. However, few returnees seem able to reflect on their own individual association to what contributes to the fear sensed. Parallels are drawn between community perception and how FTFs are received, but the caused suffering to victims of terror and fatalities, through abuse, torture and murder, is not personalized despite having previously identified with Al Shabaab. An interviewee elaborates on how fear disables reintegration and believes there is
a need for mutual kindness and care, acknowledges the difficulties experienced by the communities but believes the outcome would justify the lowering of their guard. Furthermore, ability to reflect on their individual responsibility in the reintegration process is expressed by some who translate this into practicing perspective taking, i.e. doing (R1; R6; R7; R9).

*Possibility* to perspective taking is enabled by being exposed to other views. Segregation among majority of the FTFs and their communities prevents this, which makes evident that perceptions and beliefs are subjectively attributed by returnees to the communities and vice versa. The assumption that all non-Muslims perceive Muslims as terrorists is generalized by an interviewee, which indicates he has not been exposed to other perspectives in order to challenge his held belief. It is important to note that returnees mainly interact with other returnees and civil society actors who have arguably chosen to work with reintegration initiatives because they believe in reintegration and its importance. Hence, returning FTFs are initially *being met* by individuals with the resulting biased sentiment which is not shared with all actors. Some are more prejudice actors alternatively believe in a security oriented hard approach concerning returning FTFs. Returnees might not be directly exposed to interaction with actors upholding the later beliefs, nor with victims of terror or articulated needs of receiving community members, which explains their assessment of their surrounding environment.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the FTF perspective taking is exercised to the extent that they want their immediate surrounding to understand them, in order to provide comfort and care. This is challenged by pre-formed expectations by retuning FTFs and community members alike; the former in how they expect to be received and the latter in how they expect the returnee to behave. Some community actors are willing to assist FTFs in reintegration if they meet a set of commonly understood and formulated criteria, which does not seem to be clearly communicated to the returnees. Further confusion is
caused due to lack of coherent approach in reintegration initiatives, which inhibits ability to form a comprehensive image of the others’ perspectives.

7.2 Beyond Life Embeddedness
Restoring life embeddedness involves developing senses of belonging, adjusting and understanding, which has been elaborated on above as participation, attunement and perspective taking. Moving beyond the analytical framework of Life Psychology, additional challenges emerge and pose limitations to the Life Psychology framework. The abductive approach for this study allows suggestions for refining the framework regarding issues of trust, societal structures and the concept of attunement, which will be briefly discussed below.

7.2.1 Developing Trust
All returning FTFs, stakeholders and actors interviewed for this study, highlight that developing a sense of trust is crucial for reintegration.

Trust is seen as essential in order for returning FTFs to commit to the reintegration process and lack of trust is described as a reason for failing, leaving or abandoning the process. Majority of the returnees’ trust only a few genuine actors, religious leaders and members of immediate family. This is verified and acknowledged by all stakeholders interviewed. Actors indicate that official leadership and elected leaders on county level are trusted by returning FTFs. This is not confirmed by the responding returning FTFs in this study, but elaborated on by actors who have engaged with other returnees. It is implied that exercising agency through electing local leaders works to enhance a feeling of trust. Nevertheless, developing trust is portrayed as an important component in reintegration, and a few interviewees elaborate on the importance of trust. R9 indicates it has given her a sense of fulfillment which
is described valuable, and R1 encourages receiving communities to trust the returnees, as that is seen to be the only way to give an opportunity for reintegration.

Trust can be argued to be a moderating factor for how an individual will chose to use skills developed to address challenges and tasks presented by life. Low levels of trust undermine reintegration, whereas reliance, truth and confidence would be inductive for reintegration. Incorporating the component of trust as a moderating factor, among want, ability, doing, possibilities and being met in the Life Psychology framework, would arguably work to enhance understanding for participation, attunement and perspective taking. This in turn, would enhance understanding for the concept of life embeddedness and what is inductive for its state of flow.

7.2.2 Developing Structures
The study makes evident that the absence of societal structures to legally facilitate reintegration of returning FTFs is a cause of major concern.

Structures are not addressed in the Life Psychology, but highlighted as crucial by actors as well as returning FTFs. Actors call for legal guidelines in how to engage with returnees. Inability to create legitimacy is attributed to the lack of legal framework, which some actors lobby for in Parliament and on local level. In the meantime, the consequences of this is that not all returning FTFs to Kwale enroll in the amnesty programmes, as their security is not guaranteed. Many fear being harassed or killed by security officials or other FTFs who do not intend to reintegrate. The latter group illustrates why efforts for successfully motivating reintegration is crucial, as some returnees’ intentions are unknown which poses a security risk. This could be addressed through official structures. Furthermore, due to the missing framework, the returnees
are unable to form realistic expectations. Hence, both returnees and actors reflect on how structure and frameworks are missing.

Without the confidence in structures, legitimacy is inhibited, which is not accounted for in the Life Psychology framework. The framework addresses the individual need to develop an understanding for existing structures and systems, but if a legal framework is non-existent, assessments evolve around illegitimate structures which do not address reality. Hence, it can be argued that flow in life embeddedness, as accounted for in the Life Psychology framework, demands legitimate structures, making the framework not applicable in environments with a weak social security structure where more pragmatic approaches are evidently necessary.

### 7.2.3 Developing Concept of Attunement

The concept of attunement emerges as a weakness in the Life Psychology framework, which demands further attention.

4 of the interviewed returning FTFs (R1; R4; R6; R7) indicate moderate to high flow in their life embeddedness through community participation, attunement and perspective taking, assumed as preconditions for reintegration. Yet, they indicate radical sentiments and willingness to rejoin Al Shabaab if jihad is declared by a religious leader or due to continued insecurity in Kwale.

It is important to note that the baseline norm is constituted and created by the majority norm in any given society, and radicalized views justifying violent extremism represent a minority in many societies. Requiring attunement of minority norms and beliefs to fit those of the majority, can arguably by returning FTFs be perceived as marginalizing but nevertheless required for deradicalization in order to reintegrate. However, attunement as part of reintegration in parts of Kwale might not require deradicalization, in contrast
to what is assumed in the Life Psychology. This could be argued to be the case for the radical FTFs interviewed, who might be reintegrating in a community which does not require attunement, as the radical sentiments held by the returning individual are shared by the majority of the community but where only some are triggered into violent radical activism. This indicates that one can be actively committed to the reintegration process without deradicalizing, which contradicts what is assumed in the Life Psychology framework. Hence, the Life Psychology framework does not seem to be applicable in a setting where FTFs return to an environment containing radical beliefs.
8 Conclusion

This thesis sought to increase understanding for how a sustained reintegration process is experienced and committed to by reintegrating FTFs and how associated challenges are addressed. The global increase in number of returning FTFs from violent extremist and terror organizations stresses the urgency of developing strategies to avert potential security threats and address the reintegration imperative. Arguably, the process is best informed by accounts from the returning FTFs themselves, which are accounts called for in the CVE discourse. The research for this thesis was hence conducted as a quantitative case study of Kwale, Kenya; a county substantially affected by violent extremism which produces a large proportion of young FTFs recruited by Al Shabaab. Many have returned to their county of origin and many more will follow.

Hence, the specific objectives of the study were to increase understanding for why returnees commit to the reintegration process in Kwale, what challenges they face in the process and how these are addressed by the returning FTFs. The study was guided by two research questions: ‘Why are returnees in Kwale committed to the reintegration process?’ and ‘What are the challenges in the reintegration process in Kwale, and how are these addressed by returnees?’.

The Life Psychology framework, unique in addressing determinants inducive for radicalized activism as well as factors for reintegration, frames a cognitive and behavioral process in which all individuals are assumed to aspire for a good life, i.e. life embeddedness in a state of flow. The framework hence enabled an assessment of reintegration and was used to illuminate and categorize answers to the research questions.

The study finds that returning FTFs in Kwale are committed to the reintegration process primarily in the absence of other alternatives to rejoin their respective communities. As they return from their affiliation with Al Shabaab, many simply lack other options to obtain security than to return to
countries of origin. Secondarily, in order to find security, care and compassion, majority of the FTFs turn to family and close community members, whose support and reconciliation encourages commitment to the reintegration process. The study finds that FTFs express a longing for societal acceptance and understanding, which they do little to address due to fear. Returning FTFs identify with other returnees, and display a commitment in supporting other returning FTFs in their reintegration process and enjoy gaining the support in return. A strong incentive for commitment to the reintegration process, albeit debated among actors and practitioners, is the provision of economic incentives to encourage reintegration.

The challenges that emerge from the studied experiences in the reintegration process, provide answers to the second research question. The challenges in the reintegration process in Kwale include structural, communal and individual challenges and are addressed by returnees in differing ways. Structural challenges are produced by the missing legal framework for facilitation of the process of reintegration, which poses a security threat to returning FTFs and anyone they associate with. These include extrajudicial killings by security officials and extremist or radical FTFs. Insecurity excludes returning FTFs from society and prevents developing trust. Communal marginalization and stigmatization inhibits returnees from accessing educational and employment opportunities, which makes some turn to dedicated civil society actors or community members for support and assistance in navigating their way in the reintegration process. As some turn to family members, who either reject or hide the returnee, reintegration is prevented. Others turn to religious leaders, whom are at times seen to promote radicalization.

It can be confirmed that establishing a sense of belonging to restore life embeddedness is not solely the returning FTFs’ responsibility since it, as previously claimed and portrayed in this study, requires to facilitation of
communities. Due to this, the process of restoring life embeddedness is not to be seen as an isolated event solely undertaken by returnees. Both the returnees and members of the receiving societies are actively restoring a threatened life embeddedness; the former to reintegrate and the latter due to their participation, attunement and perspective taking challenged by the external security threat that has entered their communities.

Implications of the study suggest improvement the Life Psychology framework. These include the incorporation of the notion of trust as a moderating factor in order to establish life embeddedness, as well as the acknowledging the importance in legitimacy produced by societal structures in which pragmatic strategies are needed. It is important to note that actors forming the social security network in the Aarhus model, components of which the Life Psychology uses as a justification for its generalizability, are legitimate civil society actors or officials engaged in the individualized, mentoring strategies with which returning FTFs are approached. The security structure within the Danish context, in which the Life Psychology was developed, could be attributed more resilience and legitimacy due to the strength of social security networks, in comparison to status, strength and resources of social security in the Kenyan context. Furthermore, the development of social security networks is inhibited in an environment of corruption and inequality.

In relation to the Life Psychology framework, it can be concluded that the returning FTFs in Kwale portray possibilities to participate in their respective communities, even if so to varying degrees. However, they are unable to attune or take other perspectives into account, which would result in a non-flow in life embeddedness. Yet, many of the returning FTFs indicate that they are in fact reintegrating into their communities of origin, which challenges the concept of life embeddedness as an indicator for reintegration.
The returning FTFs’ accounts presented have arguably highlighted the importance to more broadly and transnationally reach objectives encouraging this study; to advance understanding for experiences of returning FTFs reintegration process in order to strengthen individual, societal and political will to implement and sustain strategies enabling these individuals to commit to a process of reintegration. This incorporates redefining our understanding of, and demand for, deradicalization as might not always be necessary, possible or even societally expected.
Bibliography


BRICS, BRICS East Africa Project, 2016. Working with the National Government and Coastal Counties to counter violent extremism in the Coast Region of Kenya. Mombasa: TTU.


## Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

### 1.1 List of Interviewees; Returnees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gdr</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Ethn.</th>
<th>Marital status/affiliation</th>
<th>Duration, affiliation</th>
<th>Amnesty</th>
<th>Use of interpreter</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Digo</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>8 years, back and forth</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>R2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Digo</td>
<td>Married, 2 children</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Digo</td>
<td>Not married, 1 child</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, but understands English</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Digo</td>
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<td>2 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Digo</td>
<td>Not married, 2 children</td>
<td>A few months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R6</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>R8</td>
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1.2 List of interviewees; Professors

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1.3 List of interviewees; Religious Leaders

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1.4 List of interviewees; Civil Society Actors

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<td>17</td>
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1.5 List of interviewees; Official Actors

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1.6 List of interviewees; International Actors

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Appendix 2: Interview Guide

The following interview guide was allowed much flexibility and adaption during conducted interviews with returning FTFs as well as developed during the interview process. It was further modified for use in interviews with actors and stakeholders. Prior to all interviews, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality was confirmed and participants given opportunity to ask questions about the study. All interviews commenced with participants voluntarily confirming gender, age, religion, marital status, ethnic community and origin for the purpose of the study.

Background and Life Embeddedness

Have you been to Somalia?
When did you join Al Shabaab? How long you were with Al Shabaab?
Could you describe why you joined Al Shabaab?
What did you want to achieve by joining?
How did you try to change situation in your community before you joined Al Shabaab?
What did you think about others’ ways to change the situation?
How would you say you participated in your community as an active member?
How do you think you were understood/perceived by others?
What did you think of the other community members?
How did the possibility of joining Al Shabaab portray itself?
How were you received and understood by the people you joined?

Disengaging and Returning

How long have you been back?
Why did you leave Al Shabaab?
When did you decide to leave Al Shabaab?
What kind of support did you receive in leaving?

What does reintegration mean to you?
Was your decision to leave influenced by the possibility to reintegrate? If so, how?
When did you decide to re integrate back into your community?
Why do you want to reintegrate?
Is the situation in your community the same as when you left? If yes or moderately; what makes you stay?
How are you met by others in your community?
Where do you interact/engage with other community members?
Did/does the community know you have been in Somalia?

What had you heard regarding the amnesty announced?
What has the amnesty given you?
How can the amnesty programmes be developed?
Commitment to Reintegration and Restoring Life Embeddedness

What do you do to reintegrate?
How do you feel you have restored ties with the community, family and friends since your return?
Who do you trust amongst the people involved in the reintegration initiatives and people in the community?
Who do you not trust amongst the people involved in the reintegration initiatives and people in the community?
Could anything make you “quit” the process? If yes, what?

Obstacles and Challenges in the Reintegration Process

Could you describe what has been difficult in your reintegration?
How have you addressed the difficulties?
What would hinder reintegration, according to you?

From where have you received support?
What advice would you give to people who engage in the reintegration process?
What advice would you give to people who work with reintegration initiatives?
What would you want the community to know about you or your change?

What else would you like to share from your experiences?
Any questions?
Appendix 3: Stakeholder Meetings

Youth Sensitization Forum
17 April 2018

Arranged at [anonymized] High School in Kwale for 86 participants, of which 46 male and 40 female. Objectives included addressing the issue of radicalization and recruitment of youth from [anonymized] Secondary School. Annually arranged by CSA for Muslim youth from secondary schools in Kwale for the purpose of sensitization and CVE, educating in life skills, peacebuilding and conflict management, teambuilding.

The Stakeholders Meeting for the Operationalization of the KCPCVE
8 April 2018

The first meeting convening following the launch of the KCPCVE in February 2017, to establish a database of all state and non-state actors in CVE “in order to align their activities with the plan for ease of follow-up and evaluation”. Invitation from the County Commissioner, Office of the President; Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government. 60 participants attended the meeting during which issues were raised regarded the lack of engagement and presence of County Government which participants pointed out, the need for consistency in the procedures as staff from Official Offices are promoted or allocated to other locations resulting in unsustained work, education of Stakeholders in CVE work etc. The Kwale County CVE Forum (CCVEF) Secretariat was established under the County Commissioners Office to coordinate CVE initiatives.

Campaign Forum with Sheikhs and Sheikhat
19 April 2018

Meeting held, with implementing partner Taita Taveta University, to discuss the role of imams in the society, challenges facing Muslim ummah, role of women leaders and challenges (including VE) facing the youth and the role of parents and religious leaders.

First Meeting of the Kwale County CVE Forum (CCVEF) Secretariat
25 April 2018

8 elected representatives met at the County Commissioners Office to discuss practical matters and the way forward.
Appendix 4: Invitations

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Email address: mkuhale@presid.org
Telephone: Kwale 4396
When replying, please quote

Ref. No. [Redacted]

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
P.O. BOX 1
KWALE

Date: 6th April, 2018

RE: STAKEHOLDERS MEETING FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE KWALE COUNTY ACTION PLAN FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, 18TH APRIL, 2018

The County Government of Kwale and the County Commissioner’s Office, Kwale, were supported by the Human Rights Agenda to prepare the Kwale County Action Plan for Countering Violent Extremism. Since the launch of the plan in February 2017, there has been no systematic follow up on the implementation of the same.

There is need to establish a database of all State and Non-state Organizations working on countering violent extremism in order to align their activities with the plan for ease of follow-up and evaluation.

You have been identified as a partner and therefore invited for a stakeholder’s forum on Wednesday 18th April, 2018 at 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at the Kenya Red Cross Society, Ukunda. The forum will discuss among other issues:

1. Identify the stakeholders and document their specific roles in countering violent extremism
2. Disseminate the Kwale County Action Plan for Countering Violent Extremism document and assign roles based on the nine key pillars.
3. Establish a steering group to coordinate CVE activities in Kwale County
4. Receive ideas from stakeholders on the way forward for CVE activities in the county.

The meeting will involve the media, human rights organizations, policy makers, community and political leaders, religious leaders, the state security agencies, NCIC, corporate partners and officers from both tiers of Government.

Looking forward to a fruitful forum.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]
COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KWALE COUNTY